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TAGS: PREL PREF ASEC KN KS TH VM DPRK
SUBJECT: DPRK Asylum-seekers Depart Hanoi

Ref: Hanoi 1400 and previous

¶1. (SBU) ROK Embassy First Secretary (Political) Lee Kang-kuk confirmed June 27 that the seven North Korean asylum-seekers in the Thai Embassy departed Hanoi for Seoul via Bangkok on June 23. According to Lee, the RTG provided the seven with travel documents in the form of "Emergency Certificates" that facilitated their departure from Vietnam and entry into Thailand. An ROK Embassy representative met the seven at the airport in Bangkok and provided them with travel documents for the Bangkok-Seoul leg.

¶2. (SBU) Lee credited the GVN with playing a positive and "non-obstructive" role, adding that the GVN officials in contact with the ROK Embassy supported the ROKG's position that getting the seven out of Vietnam and on to a third country was Thailand's responsibility. The ROKG also appreciated the role the UNHCR played in initially interviewing the asylum-seekers, Lee said. Towards the end, however, there were some hard feelings between Thailand and the ROK over which side would pay for the asylum-seekers' tickets, Lee noted. In the end, the RTG paid for the Hanoi-Bangkok leg and the ROKG paid for the Bangkok-Seoul tickets.

BOARDMAN